

Advent Lutheran Church Constitution



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THE CONSTITUTION
of
Advent Lutheran Church
Houston, Texas

PREAMBLE

We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God's mission, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1.
NAME AND INCORPORATION

C1.01. The Name of this congregation shall be Advent Lutheran Church.

C1.02. For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, Advent Lutheran Church is hereinafter designated as "this congregation".

C1.03. This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas.

Chapter 2.
CONFESSION OF FAITH

C2.01. This congregation confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C2.02. This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

- a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
- b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

C2.03. This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.

C2.04. This congregation accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.

C2.05. This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

C2.06. This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.

C2.07. This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

Chapter 3. NATURE OF THE CHURCH

C3.01. All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this congregation are to be carried out under his rule and authority.

C3.02. The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. This church, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day.

Chapter 4. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

C4.01. The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.

C4.02. To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:

- a. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
- b. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
- c. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
- d. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.

- e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
- f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

C4.03. To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:

- a. Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.
- b. Provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.
- c. Challenge, equip, and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.
- d. Teach the Word of God.
- e. Witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
- f. Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
- g. Motivate its members to provide financial support for the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations, the synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with church-wide policy.

C4.04. This congregation shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the bylaws. The Congregation Council shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational groups and shall review their actions.

CC4.05. This congregation shall, from time to time, adopt a mission statement which will provide specific direction for its programs.

Chapter 5. POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

C5.01. The powers of this congregation are those necessary to fulfill its purpose.

C5.02. The powers of this congregation are vested in the Congregation Meeting called and conducted as provided in this constitution and bylaws.

C5.03. Only such authority as is delegated to the Congregation Council or other organizational units in the congregation's governing documents is recognized. All remaining authority is retained by the congregation. The congregation is authorized to:

- a. call a pastor;
- b. terminate the call of a pastor;
- c. appoint or terminate the appointment of associates in ministry in conformity with the applicable policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
- d. approve the annual budget;
- e. acquire real and personal property by gift, devise, purchase, or other lawful means;

- f. hold title to and use its property for any and all activities consistent with its purpose;
- g. sell, mortgage, lease, transfer, or otherwise dispose of its property by any lawful means;
- h. elect its Congregation Council, boards, and committees, and require them to carry out their duties in accordance with the constitution and bylaws, and continuing resolutions; and
- i. terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as provided in Chapter 6.

CHURCH AFFILIATION

C6.01. This congregation shall be an interdependent part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, and of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This congregation is subject to the discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

C6.02. This congregation accepts the Confession of Faith and agrees to the Purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and shall act in accordance with them.

C6.03. This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:

- a. This congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.
- b. This congregation pledges its financial support and participation in the life and mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- c. This congregation agrees to call pastoral leadership from the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in accordance with its call procedures except in special circumstances and with the approval of the bishop of the synod.
- d. This congregation agrees to consider associates in ministry for appointment to other staff positions in the congregation according to the procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- e. This congregation agrees to file this constitution and any subsequent changes to this constitution with the synod for review to ascertain that all of its provisions are in agreement with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or with the constitution of the synod.

C6.04 Affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be terminated as follows:

- a. This congregation takes action to dissolve.
- b. This congregation ceases to exist.
- c. This congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to the procedures for discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- d. This congregation follows the procedures outlined in C6.05.

C6.05. This congregation may terminate its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the following procedure:

- a. A resolution indicating the desire of this congregation to terminate its relationship must be adopted at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present.
- b. The secretary of this congregation shall submit a copy of the resolution to the synodical bishop and shall mail a copy of the resolution to voting members of the congregation. This

notice shall be submitted within 10 days after the resolution has been adopted.

- c. The bishop of the synod shall consult with this congregation during a period of at least 90 days.
- d. If this congregation, after consultation, still desires to terminate its relationship, such action may be taken at a legally called and conducted special meeting by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present, at which meeting the bishop of the synod or an authorized representative shall be present. Notice of the meeting shall be mailed to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.
- e. A certified copy of the resolution to terminate its relationship shall be sent to the synodical bishop, at which time the relationship between this congregation and ELCA shall be terminated.
- f. Notice of termination shall be forwarded by the synodical bishop to the secretary of this church and published in the periodical of this church.

C6.06. If this congregation is considering relocation, it shall confer with the bishop of the synod before any steps are taken leading to such action. The approval of the Synod Council shall be received before any such action is effected.

Chapter 7. PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

C7.01. If this congregation ceases to exist, title to undisposed property shall pass to the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

C7.02. If this congregation is removed from membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America according to its procedure for discipline, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation.

C7.03. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a regularly called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation. Before this congregation takes action to transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod.

C7.04. If a two-thirds majority of the voting members of this congregation present at a regularly called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to become independent or relate to a non-Lutheran church body, title to property of this congregation shall continue to reside in this congregation only with the consent of the Synod Council. The Synod Council, after consultation with the congregation by the established synodical process, may give approval to the request to become independent or to relate to a non-Lutheran church body, in which case title shall remain with the majority of the congregation. If the Synod Council fails to give such approval, title shall remain with those members who desire to continue as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Chapter 8. MEMBERSHIP

C8.01. Members of this congregation shall be those baptized persons on the roll of the congregation at the

time that this constitution is adopted and those who are admitted thereafter and who have declared and maintain their membership in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws.

C8.02.Members shall be classified as follows:

- a. BAPTIZED members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.
- b. CONFIRMED members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations. or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith.
- c. VOTING members are confirmed members. In financial indebtedness, the voting age shall be 18. Such confirmed members shall have communed and made a contribution of record during the current or preceding year. Voting by proxy will not be permitted.
- d. ASSOCIATE members are persons holding membership in other Lutheran (Christian) congregations who wish to retain such membership but desire to participate in the life and mission of this congregation. They have all the privileges and duties of membership except voting rights and eligibility for elected offices or membership on the Congregation Council of this congregation.

C8.03.All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Congregation Council.

C8.04.Members of this congregation shall be required:

- a. To make diligent use of the Means of Grace, both Word and Sacraments;
- b. To live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the Teachings of the Lutheran Church;
- c. To support the work of this congregation and of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities and financial support as biblical stewards.

C8.05.Membership in this congregation shall be terminated by any of the following:

- a. death
- b. resignation
- c. transfer or release
- d. disciplinary action by the Congregation Council or
- e. removal from the roll due to inactivity as defined in the bylaws.

Such persons who have been removed from the roll of members shall remain persons for whom the church has a continuing pastoral concern.

Chapter 9. THE PASTOR

- C9.01. Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting regularly called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by this congregation to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.
- C9.02. Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or who has been recommended for it by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.
- C9.03. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every ordained minister shall preach the Word, administer the sacraments, conduct public worship, provide pastoral care, and shall speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world. Each ordained minister with a congregational call shall, within the congregation, offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead; supervise all schools and organizations of the congregation; shall install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council, and with the council administer discipline. Every pastor shall seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel and strive to extend the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; shall impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through distribution of its periodicals and other publications; and shall endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and of the synod of the ELCA.
- C9.04. The specific duties of the pastor, compensation, and other matters pertaining to the service of the pastor shall be included in a letter of call, which shall be attested to by the Bishop of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod.
- C9.05 a. The call of a congregation, when accepted by a pastor, shall constitute a continuing mutual relationship and commitment which, except in the case of the death of the pastor, shall be terminated only following consultation with the synodical bishop and for the following reasons:
- 1) mutual agreement to terminate the call or the completion of a call for a specific term of years;
 - 2) resignation of the pastor;
 - 3) inability to conduct the pastoral office effectively in the congregation in view of local conditions, without reflection on the competence or the moral and spiritual character of the pastor;
 - 4) the physical or mental incapacity of the pastor;
 - 5) disqualification of the pastor through discipline on grounds of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty; or
 - 6) the dissolution of the congregation.
- b. In the case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, of the pastor or ineffective conduct of the pastoral office, it shall be the responsibility of the bishop of the synod, when such difficulties are personally known or have been brought to the synod's attention by an official recital of allegations by the Congregation Council, or by a petition signed by at least one-third of the voting members of the congregation, to investigate such conditions personally in company with a committee of two ordained

ministers and one layperson.

c. In case of alleged physical or mental incapacity, competent medical testimony shall be obtained. When such disability is evident, the bishop of the synod with the advice of the committee shall declare the pastorate vacant. Upon the restoration of disabled pastor to health, the bishop of the synod shall take steps to enable the pastor to resume the ministry, either in the congregation last served or in another field of labor.

d. In the case of alleged local difficulties which imperil the effective functioning of the congregation, all concerned persons shall be heard, after which the bishop of the synod together with the committee described in C9.05.b. shall decide on the course of action to be recommended to the pastor and the congregation. If they agree to carry out such recommendations, no further action shall be taken by the synod. If either party fails to assent, the congregation may dismiss the pastor by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present at a regularly called meeting after consultation with the bishop.

e. The foregoing procedure shall never be invoked when questions of doctrine, morality, or continued neglect of duty are involved, all such cases being treated as disciplinary matters.

f. If in the course of the proceedings, it should become apparent that the pastoral office cannot be conducted effectively in the congregation being served by the ordained minister due to local conditions, the bishop of the synod may temporarily suspend the pastor from service in the congregation without prejudice and with pay provided through a joint churchwide/synod fund and with housing provided by the congregation.

C9.06. At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor may be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.

C9.07. During the period of service, an interim pastor shall have the rights and duties of a regularly called pastor and may delegate the same in part to a supply pastor with the consent of the bishop of the synod and this congregation or Congregation Council. The interim pastor and any ordained pastor providing assistance shall refrain from exerting influence in the selection of a pastor.

C9.08. This congregation shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to a former pastor before calling a successor. A pastor shall make satisfactory settlement of all financial obligations to this congregation.

C9.09. When a pastor is called to serve in company with another pastor or pastors, the privileges and responsibilities of each pastor shall be specified in documents to accompany the call and to be drafted in consultation involving the pastors, the congregation council, and the bishop of the synod. As occasion requires, the documents may be revised through a similar consultation.

C9.10. With the approval of the bishop of the synod, the congregation may depart from C9.05.a. and call a pastor for a specific term of years. Details of such calls shall be in writing setting forth the purpose and conditions involved. Prior to the completion of a term, the bishop or a designated representative of the bishop, shall meet with the pastor and representatives of the congregation for a review of the

call. Such call may also be terminated before its expiration in accordance with the provisions of C9.05.a.

C9.11. The pastor shall keep accurate parochial records of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, members received, members dismissed, or members excluded from the congregation, and shall submit a summary of such statistics annually to the synod.

C9.12. The pastor(s) shall submit a report of his or her ministry to the bishop of the synod at least 90 days prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.

Chapter 10. CONGREGATION MEETING

C10.01. The annual meeting of this congregation shall be held in November. Notice of the meeting shall be given as provided in the bylaws.

C10.02. A special meeting of the congregation may be called by action of the congregation, by petition of at least ten percent (10%) of the voting members, or by any one of the following: the Church Council, the President of the congregation or the Pastor. Only the business for which a special meeting has been called shall be transacted at the meeting.

C10.03. Notice of all meetings of this congregation shall be given at the services of worship on the preceding two consecutive Sundays or by mail to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting. The posting of such notice in the regular mail, with the regular postage affixed or paid, sent to the last known address of such members shall be sufficient.

C10.04. The current roster of voting, confirmed, and baptized members shall be determined prior to each annual meeting.

A quorum for the conduct of business at annual and special congregational meetings shall consist of the voting members present.

C10.05 Voting by proxy or absentee ballot shall not be permitted

C10.06. All actions by the congregation shall be by majority vote except as otherwise provided in this constitution.

C10.07. Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of all meetings of this congregation.

Chapter 11. OFFICERS

C11.01 The officers of this congregation shall be a president, vice president, and treasurer.

a. Duties of the officers shall be specified in the bylaws and Operational Manual.

- b. Officers shall be voting members of the congregation.
 - c. Officers of this congregation shall serve similar offices of the Congregation Council and shall be voting members of the Congregation Council.
 - d. Officers shall serve as the executive board of the congregation.
- C11.02. The officers shall be elected by the congregation by written ballot and shall serve for two years. The term shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31.
- C11.03. No officer shall hold more than one office at a time. No elected officer shall be eligible to serve more than one term in the same office.

Chapter 12. CONGREGATION COUNCIL

- C12.01. The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of no more than 16 members. Any voting member of the congregation may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office. A member's place on the Congregation Council shall be declared vacant if the member a) ceases to be a voting member of this congregation or b) is absent from three successive regular meetings of the Congregation Council without cause. Officers of this congregation shall serve similar offices of the congregation council.
- C12.02. The members of the Congregation Council (except the pastor(s)) shall be elected at a legally called meeting of the congregation during the month of November. Their term of office shall be for two years with the term of office beginning on January 1 and ending on December 31. Newly elected Congregation Council members shall be installed at a worship service prior to the date they assume office.
- C12.03. Should a member's place on the Congregation Council be declared vacant, the Congregation Council shall elect, by majority vote, a successor until the next annual meeting.
- C12.04. The Congregation Council shall have general oversight of the life and activities of this congregation, and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following:
- a. To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission and goals.
 - b. To seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
 - c. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
 - d. To maintain supportive relationships with the pastor(s) and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling, appointment, or employment.
 - e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.

- f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill and, as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.
- g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
- h. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide units of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non- Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

C12.05. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation.

- a. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting the property of the congregation and for the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of Texas, except as otherwise provided herein.
- b. The Congregation Council shall not have the authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation.
- c. The Congregation Council shall present an annual budget for adoption by this congregation and shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance therewith following its adoption at the annual congregational meeting. The budget shall include this congregation's full indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in partnership with the synod and churchwide organization.
- d. Any expenditures in excess of the total voted budget must be approved by the congregation.
- e. The Congregation Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to the synodical treasurer.
- f. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.

C12.06. The Congregation Council shall see that the provisions of this constitution, its bylaws, and the continuing resolutions are carried out.

C12.07. The Congregation Council shall provide for an annual review of the membership roster.

C12.08. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the appointment of the salaried lay workers of this congregation.

C12.09. The Congregation Council shall submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.

C12.10. The Congregation Council shall elect a Secretary and a Financial Secretary of the congregation - who need not be members of the Congregation Council.

C12.11. The Congregation Council shall normally meet once a month. Special meetings may be called

by the pastor or the president, and shall be called at the request of three of its members. Notice of each special meeting shall be given to all who are entitled to be present.

C12.12. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the members of the Congregation Council.

C12.13 The Congregation Council shall appoint such committees as may be necessary or advisable to facilitate the discharge of the above responsibilities.

Chapter 13. CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEES

C13.01. The officers of this congregation shall constitute the Board of Trustees. The pastor shall be an ex officio member.

C13.02. A Nominating Committee of at least five voting members of this congregation, shall be elected by the Congregation Council for a term of one year. Members of the Nominating Committee are not eligible for consecutive re-election.

C13.03. An Audit Committee of at least three voting members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Audit Committee members shall not be members of the Congregation Council. Term of office will be one year. Members shall be eligible for re-election.

C13.04. If desired, a Staff Support Committee (Mutual Ministry Committee) shall be appointed jointly by the president and the Pastor. Term of office shall be two years, three members to be appointed each successive year.

C13.05. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a Call Committee of six at least voting members shall be appointed by the Congregation Council. Term of office will terminate at installation of the newly called pastor.

C13.06. Other congregational committees may be formed as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council.

C13.07. Duties of congregational committees shall be specified in the bylaws or continuing resolutions.

Chapter 14. ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

C14.01. All organizations within this congregation shall exist to aid it in ministering to the members of this congregation and to all persons who can be reached with the Gospel of Christ. As outgrowths and expressions of this congregation's life, the organizations are subject to its oversights and directions. The Congregation Council shall determine their policies, guide their activities, and receive reports concerning their membership, work, and finances. All organizations within the congregation shall submit reports to the church office at least 15 days prior to the annual

meeting.

- C14.02. Special interest groups, other than those of the official organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be organized only after authorization has been given by the Congregation Council and specified in a continuing resolution.

Chapter 15. DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS

- C15.01 Denial of the Christian faith as described in this constitution, conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, or persistent trouble-making in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation will be attempted following Matthew 18:15-17, proceeding through these successive steps: (a) private admonition by the pastor, (b) admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses, and (c) citation to appear before the Congregation Council.
- C15.02. A member charged with the offense shall appear before the Congregation Council having received a written notice, specifying the exact charges that have been made against the member, at least 10 days prior to the meeting.
- C15.03. Should the allegations be sustained by a two-thirds majority vote of the Congregation Council, the council shall impose one of the following disciplinary actions:
- a. censure before the council or congregation;
 - b. suspension from membership for a definite period of time; or
 - c. exclusion from membership in this congregation. Disciplinary actions b. and c. shall be delivered to the member in writing.
- C15.04. The member against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Congregation Council shall have the right to appeal the decision to the Synod Council. Such right may not be abridged and the decision of the Synod Council shall be final.
- C15.05. Disciplinary actions may be reconsidered and revoked by the Congregation Council upon receipt of (a) evidence that injustice has been done or (b) evidence of repentance and amendment.

Chapter 16. BYLAWS

- C16.01. This congregation may adopt bylaws. No bylaw may conflict with this constitution.
- C16.02. Bylaws may be adopted or amended at any legally called meeting of this congregation with a quorum present by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting.
- C16.03. Changes to the bylaws may be proposed by any voting member provided, however, that

such additions or amendments be submitted in writing to the Congregation Council at least 60 days before a regular or special Congregation Meeting called for that purpose and that the Congregation Council notify the members of the proposal with its recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the Congregation Meeting.

C16.04. Approved changes to the bylaws shall be sent to the synod.

Chapter 17. AMENDMENTS

C17.01. Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by at least 10% of the voting members or by the Congregation Council. Proposals must be filed in writing with the Congregation Council 60 days before formal consideration by this congregation at its regular or special meeting called for that purpose. The Congregation Council shall notify the members of the proposal with their recommendations at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.

C17.02. A proposed amendment to this constitution shall:

- a. be approved at a properly called meeting according to this constitution by a majority vote of those present and voting;
- b. be ratified without change at the next annual meeting by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting; and
- c. have the effective date included in the resolution and noted in the constitution.

C17.03. Any amendments to this constitution shall be sent by the secretary of this congregation to the synod. The amendment shall become effective within 120 days from the date of the receipt of the notice by the synod unless the synod informs this congregation that the amendment is in conflict with the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or the constitution of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod.

Chapter 18. CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

C18.01. The Congregation Council may enact continuing resolutions which describe the function of the various committees or organizations of this congregation.

C18.02. Continuing resolutions shall be enacted or amended by a two-thirds vote of all voting members of the Congregation Council.

BYLAWS

Part I - COMMUNION PARTICIPATION

1. The Sacrament of Holy Communion shall be made available to all baptized members of the Lutheran church and to all baptized Christians who accept the scriptural teachings regarding the real presence of Christ with his Body and Blood in the Sacrament, and have reached the age of ten years, or who are in the fifth grade, and have completed a short period of study on the meaning of Holy Communion. Exception may be made consistent with established pastoral practice in The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Worthy participation requires sincere repentance, faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, and an earnest desire to amend one's sinful life, as well as acceptance of the scriptural teaching regarding the real presence of Christ with His Body and Blood in the Sacrament. Registration forms, or oral announcements, shall be so devised as to make prospective participants aware of these requirements
2. Record of participation in Holy Communion shall be entered upon the books of the congregation. If a member of another congregation communes, notice shall be sent to his pastor.

Part II - MEMBERSHIP

A. Admission to Baptized Membership:

1. Children, one or both of whose parents or guardians are members of this congregation, shall upon receiving Christian baptism, be received as baptized members of this congregation.
2. Children neither of whose parents or guardian are members of this congregation shall, upon Christian baptism duly recorded as a ministerial act performed under the auspices of this congregation, be received as baptized members of this congregation unless there is understanding that, for good reason, they will be enrolled as baptized members of another congregation, in which case notice of the baptism shall be sent to the congregation in which the child is to be enrolled as a baptized member.
3. Children baptized in other congregations shall be received as baptized members of this congregation upon admission of one or both parents or guardians to membership, or by consent of one or both parents or guardians, or by action of the Congregation Council.
4. Unbaptized adults who have received instruction and have given evidence of having an adequate understanding and acceptance of the teachings of the Word of God as confessed by the Lutheran church, shall upon confession of faith and Christian baptism duly recorded as a ministerial act performed under the auspices of this congregation, be received as baptized members of this congregation.

B. Admission to Confirmed Membership:

1. Baptized adults, not previously members of the congregation, who have received

instruction and have given evidence of having adequate understanding and acceptance of the teachings of the Word of God as confessed by the Lutheran church, shall be admitted to confirmed membership through the rite of confirmation.

2. However, adults received as baptized members according to the provisions of Section A, 4 of this part of the By-Laws shall be recognized as confirmed members, whether or not, at the discretion of the Pastor, they have participated in the rite of confirmation.
3. Children who are baptized members of the congregation shall be admitted to confirmed membership through participation in the rite of confirmation.
4. Applicants for membership presenting Letters of Transfer showing them to be confirmed members in good standing in other Lutheran congregations shall be admitted to confirmed membership upon acceptance of their Letters of Transfer by the Congregation Council and the report of their names to the congregation.
5. Applicants for membership who present evidence of confirmation in a Lutheran congregation but do not have Letters of Transfer shall be admitted to confirmed membership when the Congregation Council has determined that they meet the standards of Christian faith and life indicated in the constitution when they have reaffirmed their faith before the congregation.

C. Admission to Voting Membership:

1. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for determining the voting membership in accordance with the qualifications specified in the constitution.

D. Discontinuance of Membership:

1. Members who move away shall be encouraged to transfer their membership. A confirmed member in good standing desiring to change his membership to another Lutheran congregation shall, upon request, receive a Letter of Transfer.
2. A confirmed member who; does not attend church services at Advent, or does not partake of Holy Communion, or does not contribute to the Advent treasury, according to the congregation's records - for a period of six months - shall lose the right to vote, and shall not be counted in the membership statistics of the congregation. Unless deemed necessary by the Congregation Council for other action the following procedure shall be observed. Before being placed on inactive status, the member shall be personally visited by the Pastor and one or more members of the Congregation Council; however, his/her name and record shall be kept on the files for a period of six (6) months thereafter. Such a person shall be encouraged to take part in the congregation life, or to transfer elsewhere - as the situation may indicate to be advisable. If the member does not wish to be visited, or has not kept the church office informed of his/her correct address and phone number, he shall be put on inactive status without further action being necessary. If the member is unable to attend Advent for health reasons, Pastor or

a member selected by Congregation Council shall be appointed to give Holy Communion to him on a regular basis, thus keeping him/her on active status. If the member resumes activity within the six months' period, he/she shall be restored to the active membership list; if not, he/she shall be dismissed, upon Congregation Council approval, from the roles at Advent and if possible, shall be notified of this action.

3. A baptized member under confirmation age shall be considered active if the parent(s) of that member are active. Baptized members under confirmation age, neither of whose parents or guardians are active members of the congregation, shall be dropped from the baptized membership roll if they fail to participate in the Christian education program of Advent for a period of 12 months. Baptized members of confirmation age or over shall be subject to rules of confirmed membership.
4. Members who have been excommunicated or dismissed, or who have resigned, and members who have transferred to other Lutheran congregations, or who are definitely known to have become members of other congregations without transfer, have thereby terminated their membership in the congregation and have surrendered all membership rights.

Part III - THE PASTORAL CALL

1. When the congregation has voted to call a pastor, it shall issue a Letter of Call to the pastor-elect, in a form approved by The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. It shall be signed by the Chairman and the Secretary of the meeting at which the call was voted, and shall be attested by the signature of the Bishop of the Synod. Calls to clergymen to positions of assistance to the Pastor shall be issued in consultation with the Pastor and in accordance with the provisions of this paragraph.
2. The call shall normally be for an indefinite time.
3. If the Pastor receives a call to another congregation, he shall consult with his present congregation or at least with the Congregation Council, before coming to a decision. He should attempt to reach a decision as quickly as possible, normally within three weeks. He shall thereupon notify his present congregation and the Bishop of the Synod. When a release has been granted and the call accepted, the Pastor shall terminate his ministry and transfer to his new field of service as quickly as feasible, normally within one month.
4. A desire for a change in pastorate by either congregation or pastor shall be brought to the attention of the Bishop of the Synod, who shall advise in the matter in accordance with this constitution (Chapter 9) and with the established procedures of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.
5. The congregation requires that its Pastor shall be loyal to the faith and purpose of the congregation, as stated in Chapter 2 and 4 of this constitution.

6. Clergymen qualified according to Chapter 9.02, of this constitution may occasionally perform pastoral functions in this congregation with the approval of the congregation and its Pastor, or in case of a vacancy in the pastorate, with the approval of the congregation and the Bishop of the Synod.

Part IV - THE ANNUAL MEETING

1. The order of business at the annual meeting shall be:
 - (a) Opening devotion
 - (b) Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting (if necessary)
 - (c) Reports of Pastor, Congregation Council, Treasurer, Committees, and others
 - (d) Elections
 - (e) Approval of Budget
 - (f) Unfinished business
 - (g) New business
 - (h) Closing Prayer
2. In the following cases, voting shall be by written ballot:
 - (a) To elect the members of the Congregation Council
 - (b) To adopt, or amend, the articles of incorporation, constitution, or by-laws of the congregation
 - (c) To call a pastor, or to request his resignation
 - (d) To excommunicate a member from office in the congregation
 - (e) To sever membership in The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
 - (f) To dispose of, encumber, or purchase real property
 - (g) When requested by ten or more voting members present
3. If more than one ballot is required in an election, a motion shall be in order to limit the balloting after the first ballot to the three candidates receiving the highest number of votes on the first ballot; and after the second ballot to limit the balloting to the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes.

Part V - THE CONGREGATION COUNCIL

A. Membership and Meetings of the Congregation Council:

1. The Congregation Council shall consist of 16 members, each to be elected to a defined position for a term of two years, with such members being elected to serve the first year in a vice-chairperson position and the second year as the chairperson of that position. Election shall be in such a manner as to elect one-half of the congregation council each year.
2. In addition to the requirements of congregational membership stated in Chapter 8 of the constitution, qualifications for membership on the Congregation Council shall include such practical ability as is needful in promoting the various interests of the congregation, as outlined

in the duties of the various committees of the Congregation Council. The minimum age for a member of the Congregation Council shall be 21 years.

3. No member of the Congregation Council shall serve more than one consecutive term in any Congregation Council Position.
4. The Pastor shall be ex-officio a member of the Congregation Council.
5. The Congregation Council may, at its discretion, by a majority vote, choose to invite any additional staff person or persons to sit in at regular Congregation Council meetings, along with the Pastor or Pastors, as ex-officio members. However, as in the case of an ex-officio member, this person or persons shall have no vote.

B. Boards of the Congregation Council:

1. The Congregation Council shall define those positions to which council members are elected by the congregation.
2. The Congregation Council shall have authority to appoint or elect additional congregational members who are not members of the Congregation Council as members on its regular boards.
3. The Congregation Council shall at least once a year invite the full membership of its regular boards together with representatives chosen by the organizations of the congregation to review the entire program of the congregation.

C. Duties of Officers and Boards of the Congregation Council:

1. The President shall preside over meetings of the Congregation Council and of the congregation.
2. The Vice-President shall preside in the absence of the President.
3. The Secretary shall keep the minutes of the Congregation Council and of the congregation, and shall preserve its archives.
4. The Treasurer shall be bonded and shall be custodian of all funds of the congregation; and shall disburse all such funds in accordance with the decisions of the congregation or the Congregation Council. He shall present an audited report to the annual congregational meeting and such other reports to the Congregation Council as may be required.
5. The Executive Board consisting of the President, Vice-President, and Treasurer shall be responsible for the paid staff of the church, both clergy and lay. They should coordinate the goals and plan the meetings of the congregation and shall make recommendation of such to the congregation council.

6. The Board of Deacons shall be responsible to see that the worship and sacramental practices of the church are conducted in accordance with the doctrines and policies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and in harmony with the practices of Advent Lutheran Church and shall make recommendation of such to the congregation council.
7. The Board of Stewardship and Finance is responsible to implement and enrich the fundraising efforts of the Parish. They shall cultivate the skills and resources of the congregation. They shall manage the accounting system, prepare the budget and interpret the needs of ministry of the congregation and shall make recommendations of such to the congregation council.
8. The Board of Parish Education shall be responsible for providing adequate and creative education resources for all ages of the congregation and shall make recommendations all ages of the congregation and shall make recommendations of such to the congregation council.
9. The Board of Property is responsible for all properties of the congregation. They shall execute proper lawn maintenance and building management and shall make recommendation of such to the congregation council.
10. The Board of Outreach is responsible for the outreach of the congregation in terms of membership growth and nurturing members in faithful sacramental and worship life and shall make recommendation of such to the congregation council.
11. The Board of Organizations shall be responsible for coordinating and supporting the fellowship of the congregation through its various organizations with regular and special activities to enhance the life of the congregation and shall make recommendation of such to the congregation council.

D. Other Responsibilities of the Congregation Council:

1. The Congregation Council shall be empowered to secure such help as is needed to carry on the work of the congregation, such as organist, choir director, parish worker, pastor's secretary, office secretary, intern, custodian, etc., and shall fix their salaries.
2. Adjustments in the salary of the Pastor shall be the responsibility of the Congregation Council, subject to the congregation's approval of the budget.
3. Use of property:
 - (a) The property of the congregation shall be for the use of the congregation in its normal function as a Lutheran church, and shall not be used in anyway not in harmony with the purpose of the congregation.
 - (b) Buildings which are the property of the congregation shall not be lent or rented to any group or individual not affiliated with the congregation or with The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America unless application for such use has been approved by the Congregation Council by a

two-thirds majority in the case of occasional use or regular use. The total use of our facilities shall be coordinated through the Organizations Committee to insure effective usage for our own needs in addition to community involvement and outreach. The President of the congregation shall inform the congregation on a regular and prompt basis, via the Sunday worship service and or newsletter, concerning any approval granted by the Congregation Council for the regular use of our facilities. Such notice shall include the name of the person or group using the facilities along with the purpose of the use and other pertinent facts on the usage. In addition, notification to the congregation assembled shall be made by the Congregation Council at the next regular congregational meeting.

Part VI - NOMINATING COMMITTEE

1. The members of the nominating committee shall nominate one or more candidates for each position to be filled and shall secure the consent of each candidate to serve if elected.
2. The candidates of the nominating committee shall be made known to the congregation in conjunction with the announcements of the special or annual meeting at which the election is to take place.
3. In addition to the candidates submitted by the nominating committee, additional nominations may be made from the floor.

Revised 6/97

Revised again numerous times through 1/4/2011; minor spelling errors, and many spacing problems corrected; font problems corrected. Of course, this is not an official copy, but it is easier to look at.